Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the specification:

Listing of Claims

1. (original) A process for reducing an exocyclic double bond at the 5-position of a thiazolidinedione moiety of a thiazolidinedione precursor comprising the steps of:
   a) preparing a solution or suspension of the thiazolidinedione precursor in a non-ether solvent medium with a base, and
   b) combining the solution or suspension with a dithionite source.

2. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the solvent medium is ~~comprises an aqueous medium which comprises~~ water or a mixture of water with one or more organic solvents.

3. (currently amended)—~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the organic solvent ~~comprises~~ is an alcohol, an alkyl ester, an aromatic hydrocarbon, a halogenated hydrocarbon, an amide, ~~or~~ a urea, or a mixture thereof.

4. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 2 ~~or 3~~, wherein the organic solvent is methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, ethyl acetate, toluene, xylene, methylene chloride, N,N-dimethyl- formamide, or a mixture thereof.

5. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1 , wherein the dithionite source ~~comprises~~ *is* sodium-, lithium-, potassium-, calcium-, magnesium-, a tetraalkylammonium- or a guanidinium-dithionite.

6. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the dithionite source is sodium dithionite.

7. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the base is an alkaline or alkaline earth carbonate, an alkaline hydrogen carbonate, an organic secondary or tertiary amine or an amidine.

8. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the base is sodium carbonate or potassium carbonate.

9. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, which process takes place in the presence of a phase-transfer catalyst.

10. (currently amended)—~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the phase-transfer catalyst ~~comprises~~ is a tetrabutylammonium halide, a tetraethylammonium halide or a benzyl tributylammonium halide.

11. (currently amended)—~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the thiazolidinedione precursor is 5-[4-[2-(5-ethyl-2-pyridinyl)ethoxy]phenyl]methenyl-2,4-thiazolidinedione or 5-[4-[2-(methyl-2-pyridinylamino)ethoxy]phenyl]methenyl-2,4-thiazolidinedione.

12. (currently amended)~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the thiazolidinedione precursor is 5-[4-[(3,4-dihydro-6-hydroxy-2,5,7,8-tetramethyl-2*H*-1-benzopyran-2-yl)methoxy] phenyl]methenyl-2,4- thiazolidinedione.

13. (currently amended)~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the solution or suspension of the thiazolidinedione precursor in the solvent medium with the base is combined with the dithionite source at ~~elevated~~ a temperature at about 40°C to 100°C.

14. (currently amended)~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of isolating ~~of~~ the reduced thiazolidinedione precursor.

15. (currently amended) A process for preparing a thiazolidinedione antihyperglycemic compound comprising reducting ~~of~~ the exocyclic double bond at the 5-position of ~~the~~ a thiazolidinedione moiety of ~~the~~ a corresponding thiazolidinedione precursor which process comprises the steps of:

a) preparing a solution or suspension of the thiazolidinedione precursor in a non-ether solvent medium with a base, and heating the solution or suspension to a temperature of about 40°C to 100°C,

b) combining the solution or suspension with a dithionite source selected from the group of sodium-, lithium-, potassium-, calcium-, magnesium-, a tetraalkyl-ammonium- or a guanidinium-dithionite, to provide a reaction mixture,

c) maintaining the reaction mixture at a temperature of about 40°C to 100°C, ~~for about 1 to 10 hours~~, and

d) isolating the resulting thiazolidinedione antihyperglycemic compound as free base.

16. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The process as claimed in claim 15, wherein the thiazolidinedione antihyperglycemic compound is pioglitazone, rosiglitazone or troglitazone.

17. (currently amended)A process for preparing pioglitazone, which process comprises the following steps:

a) preparing a solution or suspension of 5-[4-[2-(5-ethyl-2-pyridinyl) ethoxy] phenyl]methenyl-2,4-thiazolidinedione in a non-ether solvent medium with a base, and heating the solution or suspension to a temperature of about 60°C to 80°C,

b) combining the solution or suspension with sodium dithionite to provide a reaction mixture,

c) maintaining the reaction mixture at a temperature of about 60°C to 80°C, ~~for about 1 to 3 hours~~, and

d) isolating pioglitazone as free base.

18. (currently amended) A process for preparing rosiglitazone, which process comprises the following steps:

a) preparing a solution or suspension of 5-[4-[N-(2-pyridinyl)-N-methyl)ethoxy]phenyl]methenyl-2,4-thiazolidinedione in a non-ether solvent medium with a base, and heating the solution or suspension to a temperature of about 60°C to 80°C,

b) combining the solution or suspension with sodium dithionite to provide a reaction mixture,

c) maintaining the reaction mixture at a temperature of about 60°C to 80°C, ~~for about 1 to 3 hours~~, and

d) isolating rosiglitazone as free base.

19. (currently amended)~~A~~ The process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims 15 ~~to 18~~, wherein the reaction mixture is cooled to about 0°C to 30°C before isolation of the thiazolidinedione antihyperglycemic compound.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled)